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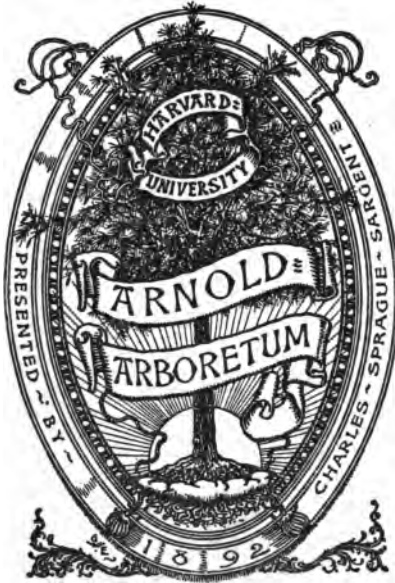
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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,
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NOTES ON COLONIAL TIMBER

FOR

CARRIAGE BUILDING:

BY

J. H. MAIDEN.



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Notes on Colonial Timber for Carriage-building.

By J. H. MAIDEN.

THERE is undoubtedly an unwise prejudice in the colonies against colonial timbers for carriage-building, and this feeling is assented to by people who should know better, and who ought to look into the merits of the timbers for themselves. Instead of a man who orders a vehicle refusing to listen to his coach-builder who suggests colonial timber, he should allow a conscientious and experienced coach-builder to exercise his discretion to some extent. The tradesman's reputation is at stake, and he will not trifle with it. It is not difficult to see how such a state of things exists. Certain timbers in older countries are approved for certain uses; it is easy to continue their use in a new country without troubling to ascertain whether a cheap, efficient, or even superior substitute is to hand. Some of our timbers have passed the experimental stage for carriage-building, and a user may run no risk with them.

At the present time colonial timbers are less used in carriage-building than they formerly were, owing to the excellent supply of English and American timbers in this market. Notwithstanding this competition, some of our colonial timbers are worthy of a more prominent position in the coach-building trade than they receive. I am not so foolish as to advocate their use for sentimental reasons, but I do not see why a timber should suffer because it is colonial. Let it be used or not on its merits.

I suppose a timber could be put in no more trying situation than in one part or other of a carriage. In no trade is it more absolutely necessary that timber should be thoroughly seasoned than in that of carriage-building. Let us inculcate this lesson in regard to colonial timbers. Let our watch-word in regard to them be, Season! Shun unseasoned timber as you would damp clothing. Nature has been so prodigal to the people of New South Wales in regard to timbers that they sometimes lose sight of the fact that timber is timber after all, and that it is not ready for immediate use, like a crop of apples. Timber, each timber, has its season for cutting, just as wheat has. Don't cut it all the year round, and then grumble at it if it warps and splits. Don't use it almost as soon as it can be converted into sawn stuff, and then grumble at it if it twists or decays.

Season, season, season timber, or, in other words, give it fair play. I practise what I preach. I use large quantities of colonial timbers; in fact, I use them wherever I can, but never until they are well seasoned.

I have jotted down a few notes in regard to colonial timbers for carriage-building, more as suggestions than anything else. I am collecting data as to the various colonial timbers used and deemed to be suitable to special trades; and I trust these few notes will provoke discussion, and cause

additional information *re* carriage-building timbers to be sent in. We are going to be more aggressive. We shall not be satisfied with the consumption of our native timbers by our own people, but we desire to foster a trade in them with other countries.

CEDAR (*Cedrela australis*, F. v. M.)

This is first and foremost amongst colonial timbers for carriage-building. Some grades of this, with clear, straight grain, dense and tough, make excellent framing for many of the parts of a carriage. In fact, I have been informed that Sydney cabs of excellent quality have been built of cedar alone, except the wheels and shafts. The features that recommend it for the special use of the carriage-builder are that it is light, and easily worked. It bends well for panels when seasoned. If a log be cut through the centre, then quartered, and flitches cut from each of these quarters, the result will be that panels even a quarter of an inch thick will not split at the ends more than an inch or so,—an important matter in an expensive and good timber. Mr. Samuel Lownds informs me that he examined some samples which had been exposed to the sun and rain, and also to the drip of water from a galvanized iron roof for a period of 3½ years. The outer surface was almost unrecognisable, but the ends of the boards were neither split nor shaken. A board was planed up, and it had not deteriorated in the slightest, the colour and grain remaining perfect. Comparing cedar with the best English ash, the former timber remains sound under treatment which would cause the latter to be rotten. Our Sydney timber-merchants might be reminded that cedar which is left floating in the harbour deteriorates for the purpose of the carriage-builder. The salt penetrates the timber, and in best grade work the painting and varnishing suffers accordingly.

ROSEWOOD (*Dysoxylon Fraserianum*, Benth.), RED BEAN (*Dysoxylon Muellieri*, Benth.), and ONION WOOD (*Owenia apiodora*, F. v. M.)

Are timbers of the cedar class, for which they can often be substituted. Rosewood can be supplied in the greatest abundance, and the other two in lesser quantities. All three are really valuable timbers.

BLACKWOOD (*Acacia melanoxylon*, R. Br.)

This is a most useful timber for coach-builders, in the bent-timber branch. It bends well, and with proper treatment from the felling and sawing of the lumber, it substitutes perfectly for the bent timber in, say, an Austrian chair, and would look as well, and feel as light. For narrow boards it is used in the coach-building trade in Sydney in place of American walnut, and it is taken for that timber when polished. It is, in Sydney, only one-third the price of American walnut, which is an inducement for people to use it. It would last indefinitely in dry situations. It is really valuable for panelling, and perhaps framing.

COACH WOOD (*Ceratopetalum cepetalum*, Don.).

This is a useful timber to the coach-builder for placing in clean, dry situations. Under such circumstances, it is equal to English ash. Its weakness is its liability to rot when left in damp or dirty places near the bottoms of carriages, which are neglected and not kept clean. For very many years this timber has been in request for coach-building. An eminent coach-builder informed me that "it is the grandest Australian timber for coach-building." It is undoubtedly excellent for bodies, and a good all-round timber.

WHITE CHERRY OR COACH WOOD (*Schizomeria ovata*, Don.).

This is a closely allied and very similar timber to ordinary coach wood (*Ceratopetalum*), for which it is sometimes substituted. It is an inferior substitute, but a good timber, nevertheless.

PLUM WOOD OR ACACIA (*Eucryphia Moorei*, F. v. M.).

The name acacia is misleading, as it is not an acacia at all. It is a nice timber, with close, tough grain, and cuts well. It is capable of high finish in painting. It is a good all-round timber for body-making, if it gets fair treatment as regards being kept clean. I am assured that it stands the weather, wet and dry, very well.

In the Braidwood District this is rather extensively used, and much liked by coach-builders for the framework and bodies of buggies, spring carts, &c. It is also used for shafts and poles, being considered elastic enough for that purpose. It has also been tried for felloes, but has been found not to answer for that purpose. It does not yet appear to have been tried for spokes and naves.

COLONIAL BEECH (*Gmelina Leichhardtii*, F. v. M.).

This is a very useful timber for panels and thin boards. It is pretty durable, but rather soft, but its softness is, in some instances, an advantage. Where extreme heat or moisture has to be considered, as in baker's carts, beech will be found to withstand such influences better than most timbers. It paints and polishes well, is very easily worked, and does not readily split.

BROWN OR BULLY BEECH (*Cryptocarya glaucescens*?).

Has a good deal in common with colonial beech, but has the advantage that when cut into short lengths, it will stand nailing or screwing when many other timbers will go into splinters. It is not a strong timber.

COLONIAL PINE (*Araucaria Cunninghamii*, Ait.).

Is not fit for first-class work. It is used in wheelwright's work on account of its cheapness.

The quality, durability and reliability of colonial hardwoods (chiefly species of *Eucalyptus*), is well known. For cart and wheelwright's work there is no timber to approach them, though exception is taken to their weight. Put in such places as mentioned, no foreign timbers can approach them, viz. :—Ironbark and box for the naves of wheels, and very heavy dray-shafts; ironbark for spokes. Blue gum (*Eucalyptus saligna*, Sm.) is one of the best timbers for wheelwrights' body work; it is tough, not bad to work, and always gives two good edges for paint. For the felloes of wheels it is the best timber we have; the iron tyres seem to grip and adhere to them better than any other timber.

Grey gum (*Eucalyptus punctata* and others) can be efficiently used as a substitute for ironbark, both as regards strength and durability.

SPOTTED GUM (*Eucalyptus maculata*, Hook.).

Is strong and tough, and a useful timber for the coachbuilder. It is chiefly used for naves, and cart and buggy shafts.

MOUNTAIN ASH (*Eucalyptus Sieberiana*, F. v. M.—*E. virgata*, Sieb.).

The excellence of this timber for general wheelwrights' work is everywhere admitted, and its quality on the whole appears to be less variable than that of the timber of most eucalypts. It is recommended for shafts, swingle-trees of buggies, &c., and for miscellaneous purposes in carriage building.

MOUNTAIN GUM of N.S.W. or Spotted Gum of Victoria (*Eucalyptus goniacalyx*, F. v. M.).

Selected timber of this species, grown on dry stony ranges, is valued by wheelwrights, particularly for spokes.

APPLETREES (*Angophora*).

Selected pieces, free from gum-veins, used for naves, and, occasionally, spokes, of wheels.

BRUSH BOX (*Tristania conferta*, R. Br.).

A tough and durable timber, extensively used in the north coast districts for wheelwrights' work.

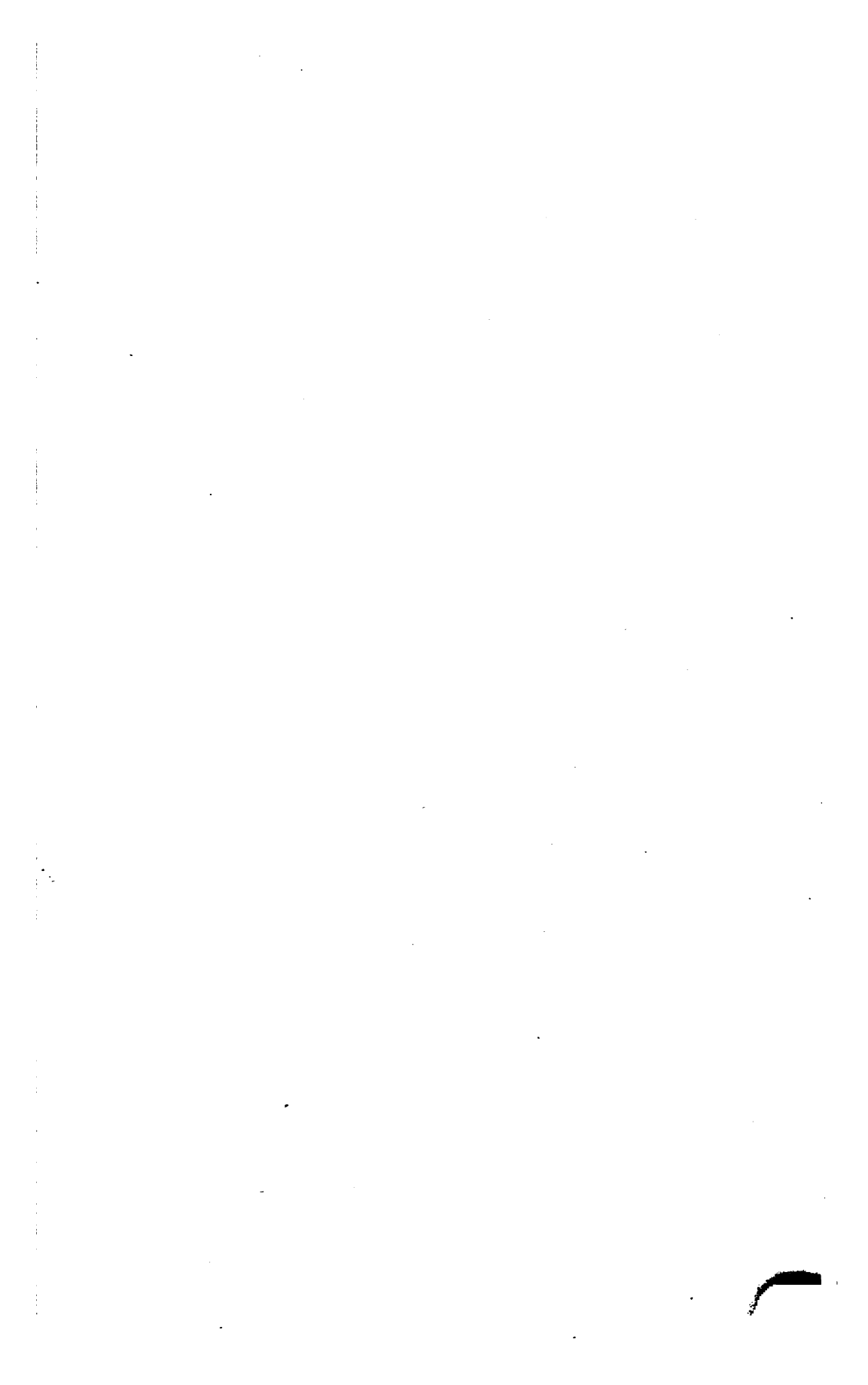
All the timbers above mentioned could be supplied in quantity, most of them in practically unlimited quantity. The list does not profess to be complete; it has been compiled at rather short notice.

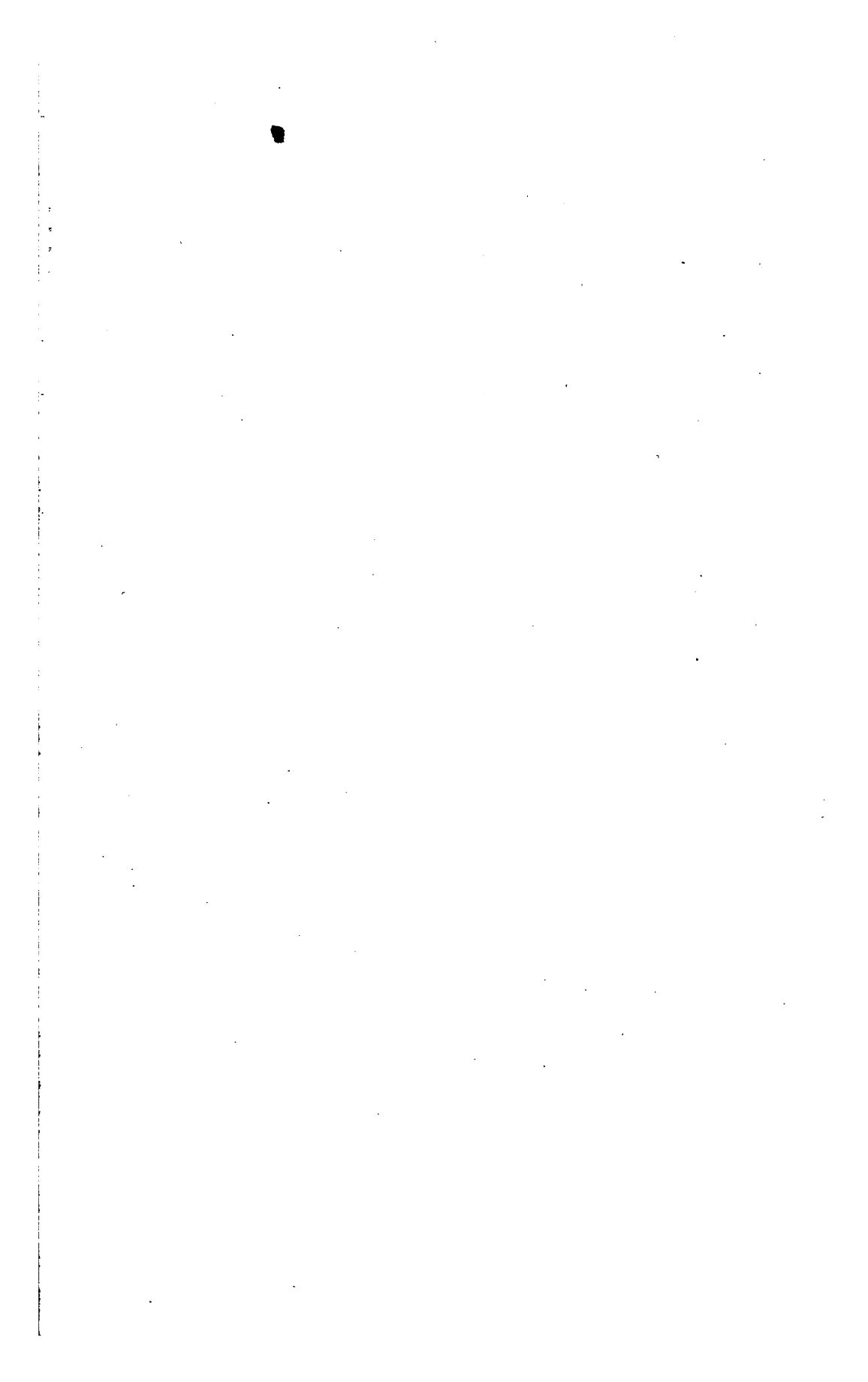
WILGA (*Geijera parviflora*, Lindl.)

Is used to some extent for the naves of wheels in the interior. Of no commercial importance.

SPOTTED OR LEOPARD TREE (*Flindersia maculosa*, F. v. M.).

Unlike many other timbers in the arid western districts of New South Wales, this timber is very elastic, and is, therefore, locally used for the poles and shafts of drays, buggies, &c. Of no commercial importance.





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